

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

- 1           1.       A system for alerting customers and sales personnel that merchandise has been  
2       left in a shopping area, the system comprising:  
3                   a merchandise detector for detecting merchandise purchased by a customer;  
4                   a customer detector for detecting whether the customer has left the  
5       merchandise; and  
6                   a notification system responsive to the customer and merchandise detectors for  
7       alerting the customer when the customer has left the purchased merchandise.
- 1           2.       The system of claim 1 which includes a processing system for receiving  
2       information from the customer and merchandise detectors and providing appropriate signals to  
3       the notification system.
- 1           3.       The system of claim 1 wherein the customer detector is a pressure-sensitive  
2       mat.
- 1           4.       The system of claim 1 wherein the customer detector is a video camera.
- 1           5.       The system of claim 1 wherein the notification system comprises a flashing  
2       light which is activated when the customer has forgotten the merchandise.

1           6.     The system of claim 1 wherein the notification system comprises producing an  
2 audible sound when the customer has forgotten the merchandise.

1           7.     The system of claim 1 wherein a notification system comprises a display  
2 message.

1           8.     The system of claim 1 wherein the merchandise detector comprises a weight  
2 sensor beneath the merchandise.

1           9.     The system of claim 1 wherein the merchandise detector comprises an  
2 electromechanical switch located on a checkout counter.

1           10.    A method for alerting customers and sales personnel that merchandise has been  
2 left in a shopping area, the method comprising the steps of:

3                   (a)     detecting a presence of merchandise associated with a customer via a  
4 second detector;

5                   (b)     detecting whether the customer has left the merchandise via a second  
6 detector; and

7                   (c)     alerting the customer, responsive to the first and second detectors, via a  
8 notification mechanism if the customer has left the merchandise.

1           11.    The method of claim 10 wherein the first detector is a pressure-sensitive mat.

- 1                   12.     The method of claim 10 wherein the first detector is a video camera.
- 1                   13.     The method of claim 10 wherein the notification mechanism comprises a  
2     flashing light which is activated when the customer has forgotten the merchandise.
- 1                   14.     The method of claim 10 wherein the notification mechanism comprises  
2     producing an audible sound when the customer has forgotten the merchandise.
- 1                   15.     The method of claim 10 wherein a notification mechanism comprises a display  
2     message.
- 1                   16.     The method of claim 10 wherein the second detector comprises a weight sensor  
2     beneath the merchandise.
- 1                   17.     The method of claim 10 wherein the second detector comprises an  
2     electromechanical switch located on a checkout counter.
- 1                   18.     A system for alerting customers and sales personnel that merchandise has been  
2     left in a shopping area, the system comprising:  
3                         a point of sale processing system;  
4                         a merchandise detector coupled to the processing system for detecting  
5     merchandise purchased by a customer;  
6                         a customer detector coupled to the processing system for detecting whether the

7 customer has left the merchandise;  
8 a checkout stand upon which the merchandise is located; and  
9 a notification system coupled to the processing system responsive to the  
10 customer and merchandise detectors for alerting the customer when the customer has forgotten  
11 the purchased merchandise.